



Recreation Residence Compliance Stanislaus National Forest Frequently Asked Questions



Why does my neighbor get to keep XXX and I have to remove the same thing? It appears to be inconsistent.

While every effort is made to ensure that the standards are applied consistently, implementation of the standards may often times appear inconsistent to the cabin owners because of historical authorizations or change in ownership. The overall objective is to achieve compliance with “current” standards and guidelines. It is very difficult to compare one cabin to another. Each situation and determination is made based on a broad range of considerations including, but not limited to: when was it built; whether the improvement was approved in the past; would it have been approved at that time if it had been submitted for approval; whether it meets current standards and guidelines; whether it meets County building requirements and/or health and safety codes; whether the improvement is specifically prohibited; whether it existed at the time the current permit holder obtained the permit; whether the improvement is significantly deteriorating; whether the improvement is a contributing element to the historic integrity of the cabin and or associated structures; and whether the improvement is negatively affecting forest resources. Thus, different outcomes are possible depending upon the specifics of each case: remove, approve and add to the permit as an authorized improvement, or conditionally approve (listed on the permit as approved with a condition).

Why do I have to remove the non-native plants? They’ve been there for years.

Forest Service Chief, Dale Bosworth, identified invasive species as one of the four major threats to the sustainability of our National Forests. Many invasive species started as non-native ornamentals planted in someone’s yard. To meet the Chief’s direction only native species of plants, animals and insects are allowed in the Stanislaus National Forest. This is a difficult challenge requiring efforts from Forest Service personnel, contractors, permit holders, and education of our visiting public.

Why does the Forest Service have non-native plants and pavement in their campgrounds/ administrative sites but we are told to remove these things?

There are differences in standards for developed recreation areas and FS administrative sites. Developed recreation sites are designed to accommodate very heavy use whereas a recreation residence is intended for single family occupancy which is not full time. Pavement is used in high use recreation sites because of the high volume of vehicle traffic and it has been determined to be necessary to protect soil and vegetation resources. We have recognized some discrepancies and are making efforts to correct situations as opportunities occur. For example, the Summit Ranger Station removed all non-native landscaping and planted native plants at the front entrance as a demonstration area for permittees. The fire crew assigned to Brightman Station is removing all non-native landscaping, including the lawn and irrigation system. This may take several years since work is accomplished between fire assignments and other project work. Administrative buildings have been repainted and only colors consistent with the color schemes required of permittees are now used.

Why do I have to remove XX, it's been there for over 50 years? Isn't it historic?

While specific features on lots are sometimes identified as contributing to the historical significance of the cabin, the features identified as such are typically unique and characteristic of the time period when the cabin was constructed. Fire pits, barbecues, retaining walls, patio additions, sheds and outhouses are improvements that are generally not considered unique to the period of construction and were usually added and/or modified over time. Garages, sleeping cabins and cookhouses are often considered contributing since they were usually authorized as part of the original cabin complex.

Why do I have to take down my birdfeeders?

It is the policy of the Forest Service to protect the viability of our wildlife. Maintaining natural habitat and food sources is critical in this effort. Non-native food sources can negatively affect wild bird's health and cause behavior changes that could disrupt a bird's response to prey, migration timing, or create a dependency on food sources that are not readily available in the wild. Bird seed also introduces non-native vegetation such as grasses, thistles and sunflowers which can spread and destroy valuable habitat and native vegetation.

Where did the rule for one driveway and parking area for only two vehicles come from?

The two car "rule" was established in the Regional Supplement to the Forest Service Handbook for Recreation Residences as updated in 2000. It has been in effect on the Summit Ranger District since 1979. In both cases, public input was solicited prior to the guidelines taking effect. Copies of the Handbook direction are regularly provided to permit holders and are also available on the Forest Service website. The guideline for driveways and parking provide for a single lane driveway with additional parking for two vehicles. Guests may park along the length of the driveway where adequate or they may park in an established parking area. In some cases, carpooling may be necessary. The guideline was established to minimize the compacted areas that are occurring throughout the recreation residence tracts.

You tell me to remove the rock borders on my lot, and then you tell me to use rocks to border my driveway. What gives? Isn't it a contradiction?

Removing rock borders outlining plants, trees, paths, etc is responding to the objective of maintaining the lot in as natural appearance as possible. Rock borders are generally decorative in nature and not necessary to protect natural resources.

Rock borders defining the driveway/parking areas are for the purpose of resource protection. Excessive driveway(s) and parking areas result in soil compaction and loss of vegetation. Compacted soil prevents water from soaking down into the soil, thus, less water is available to the roots of trees and other native vegetation. Water will also sheet over the top of compacted soil (since it doesn't soak in), gains speed and results in increased erosion and sedimentation into streams. The loss of vegetation reduces the amount of decaying vegetative material on the ground which is an essential source of nutrients to live vegetation as it soaks down into the soil with the water.

Over time, many driveways and parking areas have expanded across the lots. It is our intent to formally document and approve your driveways and parking areas in order to minimize the amount of ground impacted by wheeled vehicles on your lots in the future. The purpose of the rocks is to provide "bumpers" which will clearly define where vehicles may move and to prevent future expansion of vehicle movement outside of your approved areas.